1: Linton E-5 (1926-27) 1933 FY8 Tanala FY8.

SUICIDE

762 Suicide is extremely rare among the Tanala and none of my informants could recall any instances. They said that it would normally be due to insanity and would, therefore, debar the individual from burial in the gens tomb. In some of the other Madagascar tribes suicide was resorted to in extreme cases as a means of revenge upon a powerful enemy, the suicide devoting his soul to injuring his antagonist. My Tanala informants said that such a thing would be possible, but knew of no cases. They said that the Tanala were a gentle and kindly people and that any difficulty would be adjusted before it came to such a point. Suicide because of disappointments in love struck them as ludicrous and they were much amused to learn that it occurred in European countries.

ATTITUDE TOWARD DEATH

761 The Tanala do not fear death from ordinary causes. Their belief in the existence of a soul, and in its persistence, is absolute. They are schooled in this from infancy and nearly all of them feel that it has been verified by personal experiences. Practically all my pagan informants claimed to have met one or more of their ancestral spirits either in dreams or when in lonely places.

They believe that the soul's transition from life to death is an easy one, involving no great change. The future life is a simple projection of their present condition and the changes, if any, will be for the better. They have no fear of future punishments, for the only one included in their theology is that of disownment by the ancestors, which is only enforced in extreme cases. Ordinarily, the whole group of ancestors will be waiting to welcome them and show them their place in the spirit village. Death does not even interpose any great barrier between the individual and his living friends and relatives. He can return at will to supervise their affairs and has much more power for good or evil than when alive. With this in mind, they face death calmly and old people, especially those who are poor or neglected, often seem to look forward to the change, feeling that it will improve their condition.

763 431 When a man thinks that death is approaching, his main concern is not for the welfare of his soul but for the proper division of his property and the impressive celebration of his funeral. If he has time, he will assemble his relatives and friends and give away most of his possessions. This is important, for it is impossible to make a will under native law, estates being divided by fixed rules. Usually